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SUBJECT: ANNUAL MEETING OF ISAF RC-NORTH CHODS FOCUSES ON
FILLING NEW REQUIREMENTS, TRANSITION TO PARTNERING

REF: A. BERLIN 1508

[B](#). 08 BERLIN 1604

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR GEORGE GLASS. REASONS: 1.4
(B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: During an annual conference hosted by Germany, ISAF RC-North CHODs and representatives from SHAPE and JFC Brunssum discussed the deteriorating security situation in the north and the need for additional maneuver battalions and helicopters. While no major new contributions were announced, the conference helped highlight the new requirements. The CHODs also discussed implementing the concept of "partnering" and carrying out the transfer of lead security responsibility to the Afghans. The Germans believe all the OMLT requirements for the 1st and 2nd brigades of the 209th Corps in the north have been filled; they are just waiting for details on the establishment of the 3rd Brigade before making plans for covering those additional OMLTs. Germany pressed Belgium to assume responsibility for the mini-PRT in Takhar, as well as for the OMLT for the forthcoming Kandak there. The Germans announced that they had put their proposed RC-North HQ restructuring plans on hold pending greater clarity on the way forward in Afghanistan. The Turks confirmed that their proposed PRT in Jawzjan would follow the model of its civilian-run PRT in Wardak. END SUMMARY.

AN ANNUAL TRADITION

[1](#)2. (C) In one of his last acts before suddenly resigning amid new revelations on the September 4 Kunduz air strike (ref A), Bundeswehr Inspector General GEN Schneiderhan hosted the third annual ISAF Regional Command North (RC-North) Chiefs of Defense (CHODs) conference in Berlin November 23-24. The conference included several new contributing nations, including Mongolia (force protection platoon for PRT Feyzabad), Armenia (airport security in Kunduz), Bosnia (force protection element and staff officers at RC-North HQ in Mazar-e Sharif), Montenegro (force protection platoon for PRT Pol-e Khomri) and Turkey (new PRT in Jowzjan Province). In addition, representatives from SHAPE (Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations BG Dammjakob) and Joint Forces Command Brunssum (Deputy Commander Air Marshall Harper) were present. Embassy Defense Attache and Pol-Mil/External Chief attended as U.S. observers. This annual conference (see ref B for the report on last year's meeting) underscores the degree to which Germany, as the commander of RC-North, has assumed responsibility for coordinating actions and ensuring that new requirements are filled in the north.

ADDRESS BY DEFENSE MINISTER ZU GUTTENBERG

[1](#)3. (C) German Defense Minister zu Guttenberg delivered

remarks to the group, thanking all nations in RC-North for their contributions, especially in view of the increased challenges caused by the serious deterioration in security over the past year. He underscored his expectation that the Afghan government would live up to its promises on governance, rule of law and corruption, which would enable Germany, after the upcoming Afghanistan Conference in January, to reconsider doing more. He said Afghanistan would not become a Westminster democracy" and called for getting "back to reality" on what is possible to achieve there. He argued that the key was putting the Afghan national security forces in the position of assuming responsibility from the international community and hoped the first districts and provinces could be handed over in 2010.

SECURITY SITUATION

14. (C) The Germans noted that the number of attacks and other significant activities in the north had more than doubled this year (484 so far this year vs. 209 all of last year). They conceded, however, this area remains relatively peaceful compared to the rest of the country -- less than 4% of all kinetic events in Afghanistan have occurred in RC-North so far in 2009. The two main hot spots: 1) Kunduz-Baghlan, which lie astride the main north-south paved road through the Hindu Kush, connecting Central Asia to southern Afghanistan, and 2) Faryab, on the western border of the region, next to insurgent-infested Gormach District in Badghis Province. The insurgents draw their support from Pashtun settlement areas or "pockets" located in these two areas, which are otherwise dominated by Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik groups.

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FILLING SHORTFALLS

15. (C) The Germans identified the following shortfalls from the Combined Joint Statement of Requirements (CJSOR) in RC-North and sought (mostly without immediate results) to recruit countries to fill them:

-- Three maneuver battalions: Germany said it should be able to provide two of the three required, but provided no details on how this would be possible in the short run, since the Bundeswehr is currently right up against the current troop ceiling of 4,500. German MOD staff indicated that the additional infantry company just announced by Defense Minister zu Guttenberg for Kunduz would form the core of one of these battalions. Germany asked for countries to think about providing the third battalion or to cooperate in putting together a multinational unit. Germany pushed the new contributors (Mongolia, Armenia, Bosnia and Montenegro), which have committed to provide troops for static force protection, to consider expanding the mandate of their forces so that they would be available for patrolling and other maneuver operations.

-- Engineer road and bridge construction unit: Germany said it could meet about 50% of the requirements and asked others to make up the difference. At the same time, the German MOD staff indicated that they did not think this was a top priority, given the presence of local Afghan road-making capability in the north. It was important for the international forces not to undermine Afghan ownership by doing things that could be done locally.

-- Aviation attack element/personnel recovery element/medical evacuation: Germany received no response to its question whether any country would be prepared to provide additional attack or medical evacuation helicopters. Germany noted that the attack helicopter requirement alone is for 15 aircraft. Norway indicated that the three helicopters it currently has in country are authorized to stay until October 2010; it is now looking at extending those an additional 15 months. Italy (attending in an observer role) pointed out that the mobility offered by helicopters was key for a relatively

small force like ISAF to be able to "hold" territory after it has been cleared of insurgents. (Comment: Germany currently has eight up-armored CH-53s in Afghanistan. While Germany has some 80 CH-53s in its inventory, only 22 are currently up-armored and combat-deployable; another six are expected to similarly upgraded over the next year. Germany has ordered 80 Tiger attack helicopters from EADS Eurokopter, but delivery had been delayed by problems with the radar that supports the antitank missile system. End Comment.)

ANA

¶6. (C) There was much speculation about the planned establishment of a third ANA brigade in the north in early ¶2010. That would be in addition to the existing 1st Brigade in Mazar-e Sharif and 2nd Brigade in Kunduz. The new brigade is now scheduled to be headquartered in Meymanah, where the Norwegian-led PRT is located, but that could be changed if the 1st Brigade is re-deployed from Mazar-e Sharif to operate on the border between RC-West and RC-North. The Germans provided an OMLT laydown for the 1st and 2nd brigades, showing that all the requirements are filled.

¶7. (C) There was also discussion about how to transition from OMLT mentoring to "partnering." Norway raised concerns that smaller countries would have trouble matching up one-to-one with ANA units. It was noted that some countries, like Belgium, whose OMLTs are much larger than others -- with upwards of 80 soldiers -- might find it easier to move from mentoring to partnering. GEN Schneiderhan hoped for a flexible application of the concept by COMISAF to allow maximum participation by ISAF countries. (Comment: Germany is especially concerned about the notion that partnering requires "living and eating" with the ANA 24/7, which could raise force protection issues. The Germans would strongly prefer an arrangement whereby German troops would return to their PRT each night, which, in the case of Kunduz, is located adjacent to the ANA base. End Comment.)

¶8. (C) Germany also reported that the new ANA Engineer Branch School it is leading in Mazar-e Sharif will start offering courses in April 2010. Germany will provide 19 mentors for

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the school; Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Hungary together will provide 13 more.

PROPOSED HAND-OVER OF TAKHAR TO BELGIUM

¶9. (C) Germany pushed for Belgium to take over its Provincial Advisory Team (PAT) in Taloqan, a 50-person detachment that essentially amounts to a mini-PRT. The Germans also would like Belgium to provide the OMLT for the planned infantry Kandak in Taloqan. In return, Germany would take over the OMLT for the infantry Kandak in Kunduz from the Belgians. Belgium was non-committal about the idea.

TRANSFER OF LEAD RESPONSIBILITY

¶10. (C) There was a discussion of how transfer of lead security responsibility (TLSR) would be accomplished. The Germans reported that Badakhshan and Takhar provinces seemed to be the most likely candidates for the first round of TLSR in the north. Everyone agreed that it was important that TLSR went forward on the basis of pre-conditions and not on the whim of the Afghan government, as had occurred when Karzai suddenly announced that Kabul would be transferred to an Afghan lead.

RC-NORTH HQ RESTRUCTURING ON HOLD

¶11. (C) The Germans announced that planning for a restructuring of RC-North, including increasing the rank of the command to two stars, has been temporary postponed until there is more clarity on the way forward in Afghanistan.

TURKISH PRT

¶12. (C) On the margins of the conference, Turkish MG Oeztuerk confirmed that the Turks were planning to set up the same kind of civilian-run PRT in Jowzjan that they have in Wardak.

He said that the Turkish military's role would be limited to guarding the PRT; it would not patrol or do combined operations with the Afghan National Security Forces. He admitted that there was some friction with Sweden on this, which wanted Turkey to assume total responsibility for Jowzjan, including security matters.

MURPHY